

VZCZCXRO9096
PP RUEHGR
DE RUEHPO #0041/01 0351629
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 041629Z FEB 08
FM AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9942
INFO RUCNCOM/EC CARICOM COLLECTIVE
RUEHAO/AMCONSUL CURACAO 1226
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PARAMARIBO 000041

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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DEPT FOR WHA/CAR JROSHOLT
DEPT FOR G/AIG
DEPT FOR IO/UNP

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [TBIO](#) [KFLU](#) [EAGR](#) [KSTH](#) [NS](#)

SUBJECT: SURINAME TO MOVE FORWARD ON AVIAN INFLUENZA PREPAREDNESS
PLANNING IN 2008

PARAMARIBO 00000041 001.2 OF 002

¶1. (SBU) Summary. The Government of Suriname (GOS) made progress on pandemic influenza preparedness in 2007, and hopes to announce a National Avian Influenza Preparedness Plan in early 2008. In 2007, the GOS engaged international partners on pandemic influenza and is now working to map, using GPS technology, all potential sites that impact the poultry industry. Ministry of Health (MOH) efforts to shift responsibility for pandemic influenza planning to the local level were limited in 2007 by a lack of human resources; until these committees are functioning, a gaping hole will remain in Suriname's disaster planning. The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) is prepared to offer technical assistance to local disaster committees. End Summary.

¶2. (U) During a January 22 meeting with officials from the Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries (MOA), and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), Dr. Wim Bakker, Deputy Director of the Bureau of Public Health, told Econoff the Government of Suriname (GOS) had made progress on disaster preparedness planning in 2007. Plans under development cover two different scenarios, 1) disaster with mass casualties, and 2) pandemic influenza outbreak. During the first quarter of 2008, the MOH will announce its National Avian Influenza Preparedness Plan. The Bureau of Public Health will then hold a pandemic influenza outbreak simulation to provide training to ministries, district (state) governments, and private organizations. Dr. Edmund Rozenblad, Director of Animal Production and Health at the MOA, added that the MOA will also hold its own tabletop exercise on avian influenza in 2008.

¶3. (U) During the meeting, participants outlined GOS efforts in 2007 to prepare against a pandemic influenza outbreak. First, the MOH increased surveillance of acute respiratory infections in hospitals. Second, the GOS reinforced partnerships with the Caribbean Epidemiological Center (CAREC) and with the Pasteur Institute (French Guiana) for diagnostic testing of pandemic influenza. Third, GOS officials attended meetings hosted by CARICOM member countries and by the Office International des Epizooties (OIE) on issues ranging from migratory bird routes, to tracking the live poultry industry, to creating public awareness of avian influenza. Fourth, the MOH held a disaster preparedness conference on avian influenza with all identified stakeholders, and used the outputs from this to write the National Avian Influenza Preparedness Plan.

¶4. (U) The Bureau of Public Health conducted outreach activities in 2007 to the districts of Wanica and Para, where most of the country's poultry farms are located, and in Nickerie, the district bordering Guyana. During these meetings, Dr. Bakker told Econoff, they encouraged district governments and hospitals to set up

disaster committees. To date, no district-level or hospital disaster committees exist. After the National Avian Influenza Preparedness Plan is issued, districts and hospitals should create disaster committees to do functional planning as detailed planning cannot be done at the national level. The MOH will sign a Memorandum of Understanding with each committee and provide training on dealing with a pandemic influenza outbreak or mass casualties from a disaster.

15. (U) Dr. Rozenblad said the MOA completed GPS-mapping of all major producers of poultry in 2007. Live bird markets and slaughterhouses in Central and Eastern Suriname were also mapped, and those in Western Suriname will be mapped in early 2008. The MOA district offices have received training and will begin adding pet shops and importers of poultry and poultry products in 2008. MOA officials will train people in the poultry industry on bio-security once the mapping project is completed. In addition, the MOA cooperated with the Ministry of Physical Planning, Land and Forestry Management, on mapping the nesting sites of aquatic birds in order to monitor how close migratory birds get to the poultry industry.

16. (U) In a separate conversation on January 31, Dr. Stephen Simon, Country Representative for PAHO, told Econoff that current achievements on pandemic influenza planning were the result of much work by the MOH, and that the road ahead is "difficult, but not impossible." Since MOH efforts to convince districts and hospitals (which are semi-autonomous) to voluntarily set up disaster committees have not been successful, the National Plan could serve as the needed catalyst. If not, Simon said it may be necessary for the Minister of Health or another high-ranking MOH official to intervene and issue a letter requesting districts and hospitals comply.

17. (U) The biggest challenge, according to Simon, could be the capability of the local committees to do the actual planning, as most will have had no prior experience. They will require outside expertise and hands-on assistance in the drafting. As such, it

PARAMARIBO 00000041 002.2 OF 002

could take several years to draft these plans. PAHO is prepared to provide all the technical assistance that it can mobilize in order to assist in the drafting.

18. (SBU) Comment. Suriname has made incremental progress in preparing for a pandemic influenza outbreak. However, the limited availability of Bureau of Public Health human resources, coupled with the dependence on local disaster committees (which do not exist) to do the detailed functional planning, remain a challenge. Whether the issuance of a National Plan will convince districts and hospitals to set up disaster committees, or whether the MOH will have to consider more extreme measures, remains to be seen. End Comment.

SCHREIBER HUGHES